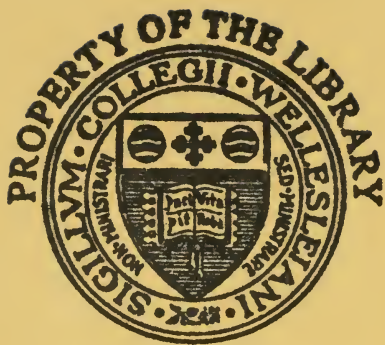


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THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN

A REPORT BY A COMMITTEE APPOINTED
BY THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

LONDON
SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
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¹ Dr. Headlam resigned from the Committee owing to pressure of other work before the issue of this Report.

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N.B.—The references to Appendixes are to the complete volume.

THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN

REPORT

TO THE MOST REVEREND HIS GRACE THE LORD
ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY:

WE herewith beg to submit to your Grace our Report on "The sanctions and restrictions which govern the ministrations of women in the life of the Church, and the status and work of deaconesses," for the consideration of which subject we were appointed in the early part of 1917.

By your Grace's request our investigations have been purely historical in character. We have not dealt with questions bearing upon sex in comparative or speculative theology, nor with the reasons why women have never been ordained to the priesthood. The application of the results of our researches to the solution of modern problems has not been before us. Opinions or suggestions on these matters expressed in the appendixes are given solely on the responsibility of their writers. We are well aware of these matters, but it seems desir-

able to emphasise the fact that they do not come under the terms of reference of this Committee.

The obscurity of the subject in the Middle Ages has led to a certain amount of delay. We considered it better to wait until we could get a good body of material rather than to produce at an earlier date a less full and adequate treatment of the subject. Even as it is, we are by no means satisfied with what is here offered, but we trust that the materials will be of some value to other workers, and may lead to the production of a really scholarly and exhaustive treatise on the whole subject.

PART I

THE NEW TESTAMENT

AN historical inquiry into the "Ministry of Women" in the Christian Church must begin with the evidence furnished by the New Testament. As, however, a full discussion of this aspect of the subject is to be found in a Memorandum contributed by the Rev. A. J. Mason, D.D., Canon of Canterbury, and embodied in the Appendixes, it will not be necessary here to give more than a brief summary of the main facts.

In the first century of the Christian era the position of women, both in Judea and in the Roman Empire generally, was one of inferiority, as compared with that of men, in respect of social status, education, and influence. The very frequent and prominent mention of women in the Gospel narratives is therefore all the more noteworthy. The passage in which we are told that the disciples marvelled because Jesus was speaking with a woman (John iv. 27) stands by itself. Our Lord's teaching gives no support to the prevalent Jewish opinion upon the lower status of women. He addresses Himself to both sexes without distinction. His message is given as much to the women as to the men. Devoted women followed in His company, and minis-

tered to His wants (Luke viii. 2-3). At the last, when the disciples had fled, women stood by Him at the cross. After the Resurrection, women were the first to receive the privilege of the manifestations of the Risen Lord. And it may safely be assumed that they were present in the upper chamber when "the lot fell upon Matthias" (Acts i. 15-26).

On the other hand, the Twelve Apostles were men; and the Seventy who were sent forth to preach the Kingdom were men. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was instituted in the presence of the Apostles only. The Apostolic commission recorded in John xx. 19-23 was delivered to men. The evangelistic charge narrated in Matt. xxviii. 16-20 would appear to have been delivered to "the eleven disciples." These facts taken together are proof that there were functions and responsibilities which at the first our Lord assigned to men and did not assign to women. As regards spiritual privilege there was entire equality between the sexes. As regards religious vocation and public duties there was no such identity. All branches of the Church have hitherto interpreted this testimony of the Gospels to mean that the government of the Church and the responsibility for the Ministry of the Word and the Sacraments were entrusted to men.

The chief passages in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles which bear upon the place and work of women in the Church may be said to confirm this view: Acts i. 14; v. 14; vi. 1; viii. 3, 12; ix. 2, 36-42; xii. 12 *ff.*; xvi. 14, 40; xvii. 4, 12, 34; xviii. 2, 18, 26; xxi. 5, 9; Rom. xvi. 1-4, 6, 7, 12, 13, 15;

1 Cor. i. 11; vii.; xi. 3-16; xiv. 34-36; xvi. 19; Eph. v. 22 *ff.*; Phil. iv. 2, 3; Col. iii. 18; 1 Tim. ii. 9-15; iii. 11; v. 2-15; 2 Tim. i. 5; Tit. ii. 2-5; Philem. 2; Jas. i. 27; 1 Pet. iii. 1-6; v. 13; 2 John; Rev. ii. 20.

On the Day of Pentecost and afterwards, women no less than men were partakers of the special gifts of the Spirit. There were women who prophesied as well as men (Acts xi. 28; xxi. 10; 1 Cor. xii. 28; xiv.). In 1 Cor. xi. 5 St. Paul considers the case of a woman "praying or prophesying with her head unveiled." It has been suggested that in 1 Cor. xiv. 34-40 he deals with the complaint that certain women had interrupted the gatherings of the faithful. But if we may judge from 1 Cor. xiv. 34, "Let the women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak," and 1 Tim. ii. 12, "But I permit not a woman to teach," the Apostle did not sanction teaching in public by women. The suggestion that 1 Cor. xiv. 34 is a later interpolation, on the ground that in certain authorities it appears after verse 40, does not seem warranted by the evidence.

In connection with this particular passage it may be worth while to observe, in passing, that the expressions "in the churches," "in the church" (1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35), have no reference to the buildings in which worship was conducted, but to the public assemblies, as distinct from the private gatherings, of Christians in the Apostolic age.

The special gifts of a woman who "prophesied" were not regarded as constituting any claim to take a share in the administration of the Churches. There

is no evidence to show that women ever held the public offices of "teacher," "presbyter," or "bishop." The theory that in 1 Tim. v. 2 there is a mention of "presbyteresses" is untenable. The conclusion seems to be, that, as indeed might have been expected, in New Testament times only men occupied positions in the Christian Church which carried with them the Ministry of Government and the responsibility for public instruction.

Women, however, were actively useful in employing private opportunities of instruction in the faith (*cf.* Acts xviii. 26). From an early time they were entrusted with what has been termed the Ministry of Service. Phœbe is mentioned by St. Paul as a deaconess of the Church of Cenchreæ (Rom. xvi. 1); and, later on, deaconesses seem to be recognised as a class of Church officials (1 Tim. iii. 11). Their office seems to have been to minister to those who were in distress or destitution. Moreover, as we may gather from 1 Tim. v. 9, 10, widows formed a separate class, and a list, or roll, of them was kept. These widows were pensioners supported by the Church, and their duty was to offer constant prayers. Such was perhaps also the chief duty of those whom St. Paul speaks of as "virgins" in 1 Cor. vii. 7.¹

There are certain well-known passages—*e.g.*, 1 Tim. ii. 11-15, 1 Pet. iii. 6—in which the Apostolic writers make use of arguments about women which are obviously coloured by the prevalent Rabbinic methods of exegesis; but they have no bearing upon the subject of the Ministry.

¹ See the discussion of this in Dr. C. H. Turner's Appendix.

In his Epistles to the Galatians (iii. 28) and the Colossians (iii. 11) St. Paul teaches that in Christ every barrier is swept away; in Christ there is no room for the distinctions of race, rank, or even sex. But these mundane differences are indelible; and each variety has its opportunity of special service. They do not disappear on earth, although in Christ they are obliterated. In Him mankind is one family. Race and sex have their respective gifts to be dedicated and used. The work and calling of the sexes continue different, although in Christ there is neither male nor female.

The historic Ministry of the Church of Christ has been transmitted through the male sex from the days of the Apostles. This restriction of the priesthood may have been due to the fact that in those times women would not have been entrusted with official posts of public administration; it may have been due to the influence of Jewish usage in the Temple and Synagogue; it may have been due to the recognition of fundamental differences in function and calling inherent in the natural variety of sex. It is not our province to discuss these questions. We simply record the fact that the restriction of the Ministry of the priesthood to men originated in a generation which was guided by the special gifts of the Holy Spirit. The evidence of the New Testament is the evidence of that generation.

PART II

THE MINISTRATIONS OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT TO MODERN TIMES.

HISTORY OF DEACONESSES SINCE APOSTOLIC TIMES.

PASSING from New Testament times, the first evidence of importance is supplied by Pliny in his letter to Trajan, in which he refers to *ancillæ quæ vocantur ministræ*,¹ but the first mention of Christian women ministers is by Clement of Alexandria (c. A.D. 150–220), who refers to St. Paul's rules about the ministry of women (*διακόνων γυναικῶν*), and not to anything they did in his own time.² Origen (A.D. 185–254), commenting on Rom. xvi. 1, 2, says that this passage shows “that women also were set in the ministry (*διακονία*) of the Church; in which office Phœbe was placed in the Church which is in Cenchreæ.”³ But the early Fathers do not mention deaconesses or women-ministers as existing in their own days. From the time of Pliny's letter about A.D. 112 until the beginning of the third century at least, there is a period during which we know nothing of the ministry of women. And until the

¹ *Ep. lib. x., xevi.* ² *Strom.*, iii. 6, ed. Potter, I., p. 536.

³ *In Ep. ad Rom.*, Book X., § 17.

early part of the fourth century we are on uncertain ground. We come then to the period of the series of documents known as the "Church Orders," and including the *Apostolic Constitutions* so called, which are probably of some evidential value as to third-century practice, though belonging themselves to the following century and later. Miss Cecilia Robinson comments on this as follows:

"Either (1) there was no continuous existence of the female diaconate in the strict sense, but in the third century the needs of the Church called for a revival of the office, and justified that revival by the words of St. Paul's Epistles; or (2) the order was in fact continuously in existence, though no occasion occurred to refer to it in the scanty literature which has survived from the locality to which we naturally look in our search for evidence."¹

The same author goes on to point out that in subsequent legislation for deaconesses by General Councils and in the writings of the leading Greek Fathers and historians of the fourth and fifth centuries there is no hint of any lapse and subsequent revival of the order.

From the early part of the fourth century down to the eleventh century, or even later, we possess more or less continuous evidence of the existence of deaconesses, and much of this is fairly complete in regard to their nature and functions. After the period of the earlier "Church Orders" the patristic references are abundant. In the days of SS. Basil and John Chrysostom the number and importance

¹ *Ministry of Deaconesses*, 2nd edition, p. 84.

of deaconesses in the East are beyond all question. The Councils of Nicæa (A.D. 325) and Chalcedon (A.D. 451) legislated for them, and St. John Chrysostom when in exile wrote letters to the well-known Olympias and other members of a body of forty deaconesses definitely attached to the great Church of Constantinople. St. Epiphanius describes their duties in Cyprus; Theodoret and Gregory of Nyssa refer to them as being at the head of bodies of virgins. We have here the beginnings of an identification of deaconess and abbess which becomes more clearly defined later on in the West. In the seventh century we again hear of the forty at St. Sophia, while at Antioch two women are each described as deaconess and abbess.¹ From the sixth century onwards we find them in the West, although not at Rome until later. In the eighth century they are mentioned there, while as late as the eleventh century three popes gave to the local bishops the right of ordaining them. But in earlier times, when their prominence is so striking in the East, there is no trace of them at Rome. This may perhaps explain the restrictive legislation of some local Gallican councils in the fifth and sixth centuries, which did not in actual fact prevent the existence of deaconesses in Gaul at the time. In the eleventh century an inscription to a deaconess named Aeria is almost contemporary with Balsamon's statements that they had ceased in his Church of Antioch, though still existing at Constantinople, and that the 15th Canon of Chalcedon concerning

¹ See Appendixes, p. 119.

them was obsolete, while "by a misuse of words certain nuns are called deaconesses." Matthew Blastares (c. 1335), in quoting a service for ordaining deaconesses, says that scarcely anyone then knew what they did. Even later still there were deaconesses in the separated Eastern Churches, but in the Orthodox East they have been in abeyance since the Middle Ages. In the West some traces of the deaconess idea may be said to have survived in the consecrated nun long after the real deaconess had passed out of existence. To this day the Roman Pontifical contains a rubric directing the bishop to hand the breviary to a newly consecrated nun with "the faculty of beginning the canonical hours in place of the diaconate of women," thus admitting its former existence and connecting it with the singing of Divine Service. And a Carthusian consecrated nun is vested in stole and maniple and sings the liturgical gospel at matins. Thus it would seem that the deaconess first became monastic, and then disappeared, leaving some scanty traces of what she once was. These are found more particularly in connection with consecrated nuns, who themselves are now but rarely met with.

FUNCTIONS.

In considering the work of deaconesses we are hampered by the fact that practice varied greatly from place to place and from time to time.

The following seems to be a fair summary of the duties performed by deaconesses:

1. *Acting as a servant of the bishop.* The *Apos-*

*tolie Constitutions*¹ say that no women are to have any communication with the bishop except through the deaconess.

2. *Assisting at the baptism of women.* They anointed women at their baptism² and received the newly baptised after immersion,³ but they did not actually baptise. Thus in the *Syriac Didascalia*⁴ we read:

“When women go down into the water, it is required that by a deaconess those who go down into the water should be anointed with the oil of anointing . . . where there is a woman, and yet more a deaconess, it is not necessary for women that they should be seen by men . . . a woman (that is a) deaconess . . . shall anoint the women; but a man shall mention over them the names of the invocation of the Godhead in the water.”

3. *Carrying the Eucharist to the sick, and visiting them.* In the *Testamentum Domini* deacons administer both elements to the congregation and also to the sick. In the case of a sick woman the Eucharist is taken to her by the deaconess. The *Testamentum Domini* subordinates the deaconess to the widow in most things. This suggests that the deaconess was privileged to administer the reserved Eucharist in virtue of her order.⁵

¹ *Ap. Const.*, ii. 26 (Funk i. 105).

² *Older Didasc.*, iii. 12; Funk, *Didasc. et Const. Apost.* i., p. 210. Cf. Hauler, *Verona Fragments*, pp. 49 f.; *Ap. Const.*, iii. 15 f., v. 28 (Funk i. 211, 531).

³ *Eth. Didasc.*, *Older Didasc.*

⁴ See Appendixes, p. 69.

⁵ It is not easy to determine the exact value of this evidence, in view of the fact that private reservation of the Eucharist for reception at home was carried out in times

The visiting of the sick and poor by deaconesses is mentioned in the *Apostolic Constitutions*¹ and by Epiphanius,² and in times of persecution deaconesses also ministered to confessors in prison.³

4. *Teaching.* Sozomen refers to a virgin named Nicarete of Bithynia, who, though urged to do so by St. John Chrysostom, did not accept the office of deaconess or instructress of consecrated virgins.⁴ Theodoret speaks of an Antioch deaconess teaching Christianity to a boy.⁵

Referring to baptism, the writer of the *Syriac Didascalia* says:

“When she that is baptised cometh up from the water, the deaconess shall receive her, and shall teach her and instruct her how the seal of baptism may be unbroken in chastity and holiness. For this cause we say there is the more need and necessity for the ministration of a woman (that is a) deaconess, because that our Lord and Saviour also was ministered to by ministering women.”⁶

of persecution by ordinary lay-folk. In this matter there seems to have been no distinction as between men and women. Later, when such reservation had long ceased in the case of the laity, it survived as a privilege of certain of the clergy, and also of a consecrated virgin, who in some places was directed to reserve for her own communion for a certain number of days after her consecration. This will be found more fully dealt with in Appendix XVI.

¹ iii. 16.

² *Hær.*, lxxix. 3.

³ Cotel, *Annot. in Const. Ap.*, iii. 15, quoting Lucian and Libanius.

⁴ *Hist. Eccles.*, viii. 23.

⁵ *Hist. Eccles.*, iii. 10.

⁶ Trs. in *Ministry of Deaconesses*, p. 200. See 4th c. Carth. 398, Labbe and Cossart, II., col. 1201, Widows and Virgins, deaconesses not mentioned.

5. *Keeping the doors of churches.* Deaconesses kept the doors by which women entered the church, and arranged their places.¹

ORDINATION.

The earliest evidence of the use of laying on of hands in the admission of deaconesses appears in the *Apostolic Constitutions* and its epitome, the *Constitutions through Hippolytus*. Later, its use is frequent and undoubted. Both words *χειροτονία* and *χειροθεσία* were used in the case of deaconesses, as they were of the other orders, but too much stress must not be laid on the employment of either term. *Χειροθεσία* is used where emphasis is laid on imposition of hands; *χειροτονία* does not necessarily imply it. Sozomen says that Nectarius ordained Olympias deaconess *διάκονον ἐχειροτόνησεν*.² The Council of Nicæa, A.D. 325, has an obscure reference to ex-Paulinist deaconesses, which seems to mean that, having been admitted without laying on of hands, they were to be regarded as unordained. At that time the same may possibly have applied to all deaconesses. In A.D. 451 the Council of Chalcedon speaks of deaconesses being ordained with imposition of hands. In Justinian's *Novels* the word used is *χειροθεσία*, and the same terms, "most reverend" and "venerable," are applied to them as to the bishops and other clergy, and their rank appears to be with deacons and before sub-deacons.

¹ *Ap. Const.*, ii. 57 and viii. 28; *Eth. Didasc.*, § 10; Pseudo-Ignat. Ant. 12, c. A.D. 400.

² *Hist. Eccles.*, viii. 9.

The form in the Greek Euchologion refers to Phœbe, and asks for the grace of the Holy Spirit. The service includes the laying on of the bishop's hands and investing with the stole. The chalice is handed to the deaconess, and she herself replaces it on the altar. The Italian form printed by Muratori includes the delivery of the stole. And in the consecration of a Carthusian nun the stole and maniple are delivered with the same words as are used in the ordination of a deacon.

Thus it would seem that from being at first, perhaps, merely an admission without *χειροθεσία*, like the minor orders, or like the admission of widows, the ordination of a deaconess developed into a real ordination strictly parallel to that of the male diaconate.

THE NATURE OF THE DIACONATE OF WOMEN.

In our own day it seems to have been assumed rather too hastily that women have never been admitted to Holy Orders. The obvious meaning of the word *deaconess* has sometimes been discounted by comparison with the use of such words as *presbytera* for one who certainly was not a priestess.¹ But the evidence of the ordination forms in the *Apostolic Constitutions* and the older Greek Euchologia—and there is other evidence to support it—justifies the assumption that the diaconate they were intended to confer was as real a diaconate as that conferred upon men. It is true these rites

¹ See Appendix III.

are not identical with those used for men, but it is rash to attempt to draw any conclusive arguments from this, for the simple reason that liturgical rites for the same purpose vary so greatly.

The words used seem conclusive; in Book VIII. of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, though the prayer varies, the words εἰς διακονίαν are employed in the case of both men and women:

Deacon.

A deacon shalt thou appoint, O Bishop, laying thy hands upon him, with all the Presbytery and the Deacons standing by thee; and praying over him thou shalt say:

“Almighty God . . . make Thy face to shine upon this Thy servant which is appointed unto the office of a deacon (εἰς διακονίαν), and fill him with the Spirit and with power. . . .”

Deaconess.

O Bishop, thou shalt lay thy hands upon her, with the Presbytery and the Deacons and the Deaconesses standing by; and thou shalt say:

“Eternal God . . . look on this Thy handmaid, which is appointed unto the office of a deaconess (εἰς διακονίαν), and grant unto her the Holy Spirit. . . .”

In the service in the Greek Euchology the prayer that accompanies the laying on of hands runs thus:

“O Lord God, who dost not reject women who offer themselves in accordance with the Divine will to minister in Thy holy places, but admittest them into the rank of ministers (λειτουργοί), give the grace of Thy Holy Spirit even to this Thy handmaid, who desireth to offer herself to Thee, and to fulfil the grace of the ministry, as Thou didst give the grace of Thy ministry unto Phoebe. . . .”

The late Dr. Lightfoot, Bishop of Durham, in his Primary Charge, wrote: “As I read my New Testament, the female diaconate is as definite an insti-

tution as the male diaconate. Phœbe is as much a deacon as Stephen or Philip is a deacon." As early as the fourth century St. Epiphanius, c. 376, certainly appears to regard deaconesses as part of the hierarchy,¹ and St. Basil speaks of them as consecrated.²

That the deaconess never did all the work of a deacon does not show that her diaconate was not as real. There were obvious restrictions on account of her sex. In the period under consideration nothing else would have been conceivable. But it was a restriction of function due to sex and circumstances, not a defect or absence of order. A parallel restriction is equally obvious in the case of a deacon who would not *normally* anoint a woman at baptism—*i.e.*, if a deaconess could be had.

DEACONESSSES AMONG THE NESTORIANS AND MONOPHYSITES.

The Nestorians and Monophysites retained many ancient customs unconnected with the early heresies from which they took their names, but which remained in the more remote parts of the East after they had become disused in the Orthodox Churches. It is possible that the very extended privileges which deaconesses are known to have enjoyed in these ancient Churches may at one time have been much more widely spread, and it may therefore be worth while to notice them very briefly.

Deaconesses among the Nestorians supplied the

¹ *Har.*, lxxix. 4; see also *Expositio Fidei*, c. 20.

² *Ep.* 199, 44.

place of deacons if the latter were absent, communicating women in the churches in both kinds. They read the Scriptures in assemblies of women, and in the absence of the clergy took care of the altar, the lamps, and the communicants' roll. Canon 11 of a Synod held in the Isle of Dârîn by the patriarch George I. says that deaconesses are to anoint adult women at their baptism, and to carry out such other things connected with the ceremony as decency requires.¹

Among the Monophysites, in the sixth century, according to Severus, Patriarch of Antioch, and John Bar Cusus, Bishop of Tella or Constantine, abbesses were deaconesses, and in the absence of ordinary ministers had power to enter the sanctuary and say public prayers, giving the Holy Communion to their "religious" in their own churches, only in the form of the reserved sacrament, and not during the holy sacrifice, when they ought not to touch the holy table or approach the altar. John of Tella forbids the deaconess to give communion to boys over five years of age. Deaconesses presided at assemblies of women, and read the Scriptures in them. In the absence of a priest or deacon they burnt incense, but without reciting the usual accompanying prayer aloud. If authorised to do so, they entered the sanctuary and tended altars and lamps. The bishop could permit them to pour

¹ Vacant et Mangenot, *Dict. de Theologie Catholique*, t. iv., where there is a reference to *Synodicon Orientale, ou Recueil de Synodes Nestoriens*, trad. J. B. Chabot, Paris, 1902, p. 486.

the water and wine into the chalice for the Eucharist, but not to take part in the service at the altar,¹ being deaconesses, as St. James of Edessa says, not of the altar, but of sick women.

AGE.

Tertullian says a deaconess must be sixty,² the Council of Chalcedon³ says she must be forty, the Council of Trullo⁴ forty, while fixing the minimum age for a widow at sixty (grounding this on 1 Tim. v. 9). Theodosius fixed it at sixty for a deaconess,⁵ Justinian at forty⁶ or fifty.⁷

OTHER MINISTERING WOMEN, AND THE RELATION OF DEACONESSES TO THEM.

Other women are recorded as carrying out most of the functions of deaconesses; or rather it would be truer to say that the ministries which were performed by women were in some places performed by deaconesses, in others by women who were not deaconesses.

At Rome, where there seem to have been no deaconesses before the eighth century (App. p. 57), widows-president (as the chief widows were designated) anointed women at baptism. In the *Acts of Judas Thomas* (third century) a nurse or other woman did this,⁸ while in the so-called Gallican

¹ See Appendix XVI, p. 298.

² *De. Vel Virg.*, c. 9. ³ c. 15. ⁴ cc. 14, 48.

⁵ Sozomen, *Hist. Eccles.*, vii. 16.

⁶ *Novell.*, cxxiii., c. 13. ⁷ *Ib.*, vi. 6.

⁸ Connolly, *Liturgical Homilies of Narsai*, pp. xlii. f.

Statutes it is done by "widows or virgins consecrated to God." So, too, the teaching ministry of women was not a monopoly of deaconesses; Palladius¹ speaks of women teaching women. The *Testamentum Domini*, which mentions deaconesses taking the reserved Eucharist to the sick, contrasts them with widows-president, to whom they appear in it as inferior, and whose place it was to instruct deaconesses.²

Owing to misunderstanding in comparatively recent times considerable confusion has been caused by the identification of deaconesses and widows. Fuller treatment of this subject will be found in Dr. Collins's article in Appendix VII. Some of the difficulty has been due to confusion of the deaconess with the class from which she was taken.³

¹ *Hist. Lausiaca*, §§ 46, 54, ed. Butler. ² 1, 19, 23, 35, 40.

³ Deaconesses appear to have been drawn from two classes—viz., virgins and widows. So we find in *Apostolic Constitutions* (vi. 17). The fourth Council of Carthage, c. 12, speaks of widows and consecrated virgins selected to discharge the duties of deaconesses, and St. Epiphanius enumerates three classes as supplying them—namely, virgins, widows of one husband, and married women living in continence (*Exp. Fid.*, n. 21). The last may be further explained in the allusion by the Council of Trullo (*Conc. Quinisext.*, c. 48) to widows of bishops who had retired into convents. Tertullian complains that virgins under twenty are made widows, and Epiphanius says deaconesses are called *χήρας*, but that the elder deaconesses (*τὰς ἑτι γρυντέρας*) are called *πρεσβύτιδας*, and notes that this is not the same as *πρεσβυτερίδας* (*Hær.*, 79, c. 4; cf. *Conc. Laod.*, c. 11). St. Basil speaks of women taken into the number of widows—that is, received by the Church into the diaconate (*Ep. Can.*, c. 3). St. Ignatius, too, has *τὰς παρθένους τὰς λεγομένας χήρας*.

RESTRICTIONS.

A summary of the principal evidence as to restrictions placed from time to time upon the ministrations of women may here be attempted.

Tertullian says that it is not permitted to women to speak in church, nor to baptise, nor to offer (*offerre*=offer oblations), nor perform the duties that belong to men (*virile munus*),¹ and he is indignant at women who presume to teach and baptise, contrary to the command of the Apostle.² The *Apostolic Constitutions*³ say that women are not to baptise, that priestesses were ordained for female deities, and are heathen and not Christian, and that if our Lord had wished women to baptise, He would have been baptised by His mother, and not by John the Baptist. The so-called Gallican Stat-

Such evidence as this shows (1) that because deaconesses were so frequently drawn from widows they were often called by that name, or else (2) that the duties of widows and deaconesses were so similar as to cause confusion. But it also seems clear that the widow and the deaconess were not really identical, though the high age-limit would no doubt help to cause confusion to the popular mind. The age-limit and the title of widow may have commended the latter order to the women of senatorial rank in Rome to the exclusion of the diaconate, which in its name suggested a position of service rather than of dignity, while it did not give the holder any very wide accession of power. Hence, perhaps, the sequel that in Rome and in places specially open to Roman influence we do not find the deaconess.

¹ *De Vel. Virg.*, 9.

² *De Bapt.*, 17.

³ iii. 9.

utes,¹ and the *Older Didascalia*,² also forbid women to christen, and so does the *Ethiopic Didascalia*, except in case of necessity.³ But St. Isidore of Seville says that those baptised by women are not to be rebaptised.⁴ Johannes Moschus says it is contrary to the canons except in the last extremity.⁵ Although it is well known that in later times the validity of baptism by women has been generally recognised in the Church, it is spoken of as a disputed question by Hugh of St. Victor as late as the twelfth century.

The *Testamentum Domini*, which exalts widows, forbids widows-president to speak in church;⁶ so also do the *Apostolic Constitutions*;⁷ in the *Older Didascalia* women are not to teach at all,⁸ and the *Ethiopic Didascalia* reminds its readers that "our Lord did not send out women to preach." The Gallican Statutes⁹ forbids them to teach in an assembly of men.

In his *Catechetical Lectures*, St. Cyril of Jerusalem says that women are not to pray or sing aloud in church,¹⁰ and the Council of Laodicea forbids them to approach the altar.¹¹

The first Council of Toledo, A.D. 400, forbids a "professa," or widow, to sing anthems in her own house in the absence of the bishop or priest.¹²

¹ c. 99: Mulier quamvis docta et sancta, viros in conventu docere, vel aliquos baptizare, non præsumat (Hefele, *Councils*, ii. 410 sq.). ² iii. 9. ³ § 13.

⁴ Augusti, *Denk.*, p. 115. ⁵ *Practica Spirituale*, c. 3.

⁶ i. 40. ⁷ iii. 6. ⁸ iii. 6; cf. Tertullian.

⁹ c. 99. ¹⁰ *Int.*, 14. ¹¹ c. 44.

¹² Labbe and Cossart, *Concilia*, ii., col. 1225.

The Armenian patriarch Nerses (A.D. 353-373) says women are not to assist at baptism as deacons, a prohibition repeated by Isaac the Great (either A.D. 390-441 or 387-449).¹

The *Apostolic Constitutions* say that women cannot bless,² and abbesses were forbidden by Charles the Great to bless, or to lay hands on anyone,³ and in A.D. 825 a Council at Paris forbade an abbess to consecrate nuns.⁴

Gelasius, as proof of popular contempt for religion, complains that "women are appointed to minister at the sacred altars." And the Isidorian Decretals attribute to Pope Soter a law forbidding women to touch the sacred vessels or consecrated *pallia*, or to carry incense around the altars.

Anciently, as is well known, the faithful of both sexes offered the elements required for the Eucharist, either to be used at that service or subsequently. The making of the oblation had an intimate relation to the reception of the Eucharist. Sometimes women offered at the altar, but sometimes they are forbidden to do this, and they make their offering outside the sanctuary. Hence in Theodore's *Penitential* we find, according to one reading, that women are not to offer at the altar, while according to

¹ Denzinger, *Rit. Or.*, i. 22.

² viii. 28.

³ *Capit. Car. Mag.*, A.D. 798, c. 76; *Concil. Francofurt.*, A.D. 793, c. 46.

⁴ cc. 41, 43. Cf. second Council of Carthage, c. 3, "puellarum consecratio a presbytero non fiat," or, as modified in third Council, not without consent of the bishop. See Thomassin, *Vet. et Mod. Eccles. Disc.*, i. 13, c. 50, §§ 11, 12.

another reading, in churches of women religious they are to minister at the *confessio*—that is, below the altar-steps in a basilican church—a note also stating that women can make oblations according to the Greeks, but not according to the Romans. At Milan to this day an ancient guild of old men and women make oblations of bread and wine at the offertory at High Mass in the metropolitan church, but the women do not enter the sanctuary.¹

THE MINISTRATIONS OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS IN AND AFTER THE MIDDLE AGES.

When the deaconess of early times had finally become absorbed in the abbess or consecrated nun, we find no ministrations of women outside the religious orders. Within those orders such ministrations are the rule, to such a degree, in fact, that nuns of all the older orders have themselves carried out the full choir services of the Church, exactly as in choirs of men, with certain ceremonial exceptions. They have also carried out the majority of processions themselves, and have admitted and clothed novices, and even read the whole of the Burial Service. Detailed evidence on this head will be found in Appendix IX.

In all cases, of course, chaplains of one kind or another have celebrated the Eucharist, administered it to the sick (except in earlier times), blessed such things as candles on Candlemas Day, palms on Palm Sunday, and the like, and acted as deacon

¹ See Appendix XVI.

and sub-deacon. Indeed, some great nunneries like Shaftesbury kept clerks expressly for the purpose of being gospeller and epistoler. But we find no provision for men being maintained to do the rest of the ministrations of the altar, so it may be legitimate to assume that in a house like Shaftesbury much of the ministration at High Mass, with regard to incense, lights, and the like, would be done by the nuns themselves, though no doubt with some restriction as to the actual approach to the altar. Certainly the whole management and arrangement of the church and its services was in their hands, and the nun who was sacristan was responsible for their being properly carried out.

In later times, on the Continent male clerks or servers were brought into some convents of women, in order that the ceremonial should be carried out more or less as in other churches. In many of the newer religious orders the whole of the choir services are not said, the sisters only being required to use the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary: in such cases as these the full system described above cannot be looked for.

ECCLESIASTICAL POWERS OF WOMEN.

The part taken by women religious in the services of the Church involves their relations with the chaplains who served them, and who occupied a more or less subordinate position in the economy of the house. The whole conception of the place of women as such in the Church is also involved.

The heads of nunneries and chapters of nuns had very considerable powers, which extended to their relations with the clergy who had the cure of souls in parish churches the revenues of which were appropriated to the convent. In cases like these, women exercised a considerable amount of such ecclesiastical rule as is generally associated with bishops, or at least abbots.

It would seem that alike in the matter of the taking of services and in the exercise of these powers of government, the threefold monastic vow was not the ground of action, but rather the possession of a semi-clerical status, akin to that of the minor orders. For canonesses, some of whom were not under the threefold monastic vow, had similar services in their churches, and enjoyed similar powers to those of Benedictine and Cistercian nuns.¹

Intimately connected with the question of the exercise of ecclesiastical jurisdiction by women religious is that of double monasteries, in which religious of both sexes lived under the rule of the abbess. Here the first point to be noted is that none of these houses seems to have been under an abbot; where there are both sexes, it is the abbess who is the superior. This indicates that such houses were essentially nunneries. Mr. Hamilton Thompson, in his careful examination of this question which we have printed as Appendix VIII., comes to the conclusion that the male portion of these communities was subsidiary, and existed to

¹ For a fuller treatment of the subject of Canonesses see Appendixes IX., p. 171 and XVI., p. 309.

do those things which canonical and physical disabilities prevented the nuns from doing. In Saxon times these male sections consisted of priests who ministered to the nuns in spiritual things and lay-brethren who did the harder manual work. When we come to the great Benedictine revival of later Saxon times the organised male community disappears, and the nuns have merely chaplains and male servants. Later on there is a distinct return to the earlier idea, and in the case of a few of the greater women's houses, such as Shaftesbury, Wilton, and Lacock, a small college of secular canons existed in connection with the nunnery, the canons being supported by the revenues of churches appropriated to the monastery as their prebends. In course of time, as in the case of other secular canons, pluralism increased and the canons became non-resident, their duties being carried out by chaplains whom they paid as substitutes. The smaller nuns' houses of the later Middle Ages were simply served by chaplains paid from the common revenue; but the uncertainty of such ministrations, with the need of manual labour, seems to have led in some places to another revival of the old idea of an organised male community.

Thus the Arroasian Congregation of the Austin Canons and the Premonstratensians or Reformed Augustinians contemplated the double system, and in the English order of Sempringham, founded by St. Gilbert, it was successfully carried out. Here each house consisted of a convent of nuns following the Cistercian rule and a convent of canons regular

who acted as their chaplains. Each sex had its own cloister, and each had access to the church, which was divided into two parallel choirs, with two altars. *Conversi* and *conversæ*—that is, lay-brethren and lay-sisters—did the manual labour. Lay-brothers are also found—evidently for the same purpose—in some of the smaller English nunneries following the Cistercian rule.

A final effort at realising the ideal of the double monastery is instanced by the Brigittine order which arose in Sweden in the fourteenth century, and was represented in England by Henry V.'s great foundation of Syon.¹ "That ideal," says Mr. Hamilton Thompson, "was not the co-ordination of the sexes in one house as the normal feature of the monastic life. It was the provision for communities of nuns of a permanent staff of clergy vowed to the religious life, who could perform for the sisters services from the performance of which they themselves were debarred, and of lay-brothers who, while devoted to religious observances, could do work for which the nuns were physically unfitted."

The conclusion, so far as our present purpose is concerned, is that sex was no bar to the exercise of those powers which included the regulation of these double houses, the arrangement of the lives of their male inmates, the appointment of canons and chaplains, and the oversight of lands and temporalities. In the case of most nunneries communication with the world was maintained by the

¹ Some extracts from the fifteenth-century Syon rules will be found in Appendix XVI., p. 315.

cellaress, temporalities were administered by nuns called bursars, and the services were controlled by the precentrix.

In another Appendix evidence is given to show that in the matter of services the nuns themselves said and sung all the ordinary choir services, the chaplains only being required for the celebration of the Eucharist and the hearing of confessions.

It is questionable how far it is true to say that abbesses have taken part in Church Councils. There are cases in which abbesses signed the decrees of local councils, notably that at Bapchild, near Sittingbourne, in Kent, *c.* A.D. 696-716, when an important grant of privileges was made to churches and monasteries in Kent by King Wihtred. Here we may note that the gathering was of civil as well as of ecclesiastical importance, and that the abbesses signing the decree were princesses. While it may be said on the one hand that these cases prove nothing but the powers accorded to royalty, it may be pointed out on the other that sex was not a bar to the exercise of such powers, which unquestionably had considerable ecclesiastical as well as civil effect. Numerous instances could be quoted of important documents being signed by female members of the royal house, in addition to the king and other male members, dealing with matters more or less concerned with ecclesiastical discipline. There are also cases of special personal influence, such as that of St. Hilda, where learning and ability, coupled with high position in the State, gave the head of a religious house enormous power in matters of civil

and ecclesiastical administration. Another not dissimilar case is that of St. Margaret of Scotland, who at a later date (A.D. 1093) is said to have been the author of the most far-reaching changes and reforms in the Church. Here, again, sex was not an obstacle to wide powers and effective action, however hard it may be to determine their exact nature.

Later on, when the feudal system developed, the abbess was liable for the king's service, though by proxy, because of her sex and vows, and she therefore had lordship over the fiefs of the convent, with consequent power and responsibility.

A SHORT SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS UPON EARLY AND MEDIÆVAL DEVELOPMENTS.

To sum up:

We find no evidence for the admission of women to the priesthood. Save among heretical or obscure sects, there have been no Christian priestesses.

But this is not to say that women have never been admitted to any form of Holy Orders, still less that they have not been allowed to take any part in the formal liturgical services of the Church, or that they have had no power in things ecclesiastical. The deaconess, the abbess, and the churches of women religious, whether nuns or canonesses, afford irrefutable evidence to the contrary.

It would be rash to attempt any definite statement as to the stages in the early development of the order, but before the end of the fourth century

we find the deaconess the same as the deacon in regard to order, albeit restricted in regard to function. And some at least of her functions were fulfilled in certain places by other women of some definitely religious status. Custom, always very varied in early times, was of necessity specially variable as regards women. From the earliest days two tendencies are at work, the one recognising the deaconess and giving to her and other women definite parts in the administration of the sacraments and services of the Church, and the other ignoring the deaconess or curtailing her position, and limiting to the minimum the share of women in church services.

But notwithstanding local variations of practice and long disuse, it is beyond all question that the diaconate of women had a very real existence. There has been no decision of the Church as a whole against it. No council of importance has condemned it. And it is impossible to maintain that the disuse has been of so complete or decisive a nature as to render the revival of the order incompetent to any part of the Church.

Women in religious orders, not only nuns under the threefold monastic vow, but also canonesses not under such vows,¹ have said and sung—and still say and sing—the choir services of the Church, with varying degrees of ceremonial solemnity, not only when entirely alone, but also when clergymen have been regularly present who could have been used as substitutes. They have said and sung the

¹ See Appendixes IX., p. 171 and XVI., p. 309.

services of the processional, and have even taken the Burial Service. They have ministered with cross, lights, and incense. Even though restricted in actually approaching the altar, they have given assistance to the clergy in their ministrations within the church. Such restrictions seem to have been chiefly of a formal and technical character.

In cases of necessity sex has not been a bar either to the administration of baptism by women or to their taking the reserved Eucharist to the sick, or indeed, in the private reservation of early times, to their handling of the sacred species for the purpose of communion.

The clerical character of certain women religious has been emphasised by their wearing of surplice or rochet, by the use of the fur almuce, and in the case of Carthusian consecrated nuns even by the wearing of maniple and stole. The power of jurisdiction enjoyed by certain abbesses has been indicated outwardly by their use of the crozier and even of the mitre. The sacred vestments placed upon the king at his coronation have in this country also been given to queens-regnant.¹

Certain abbesses of great religious houses unquestionably exercised a large amount of effective control in ecclesiastical matters, not only within the large communities subject to their care, but also to some extent over the clergy and people in parishes dependent on the house. They were not debarred from such administration because of sex. They had also extensive disciplinary powers over their own

¹ See Appendix IX., p. 178.

communities in all matters concerning obedience to the rule of the order and the statutes and customs of the house.

Except as regards baptism and instruction, there is no evidence that women ever had any part in the ordinary public ministrations to mixed congregations. Even in churches of the religious orders women do not seem to have been allowed to preach or teach openly. In the conducting of Divine Service in parish churches deaconesses and women religious have had no part, such as has been theirs in the choir services in churches of their own religious orders. Here the restriction obviously depends, not upon the lack of priesthood, but upon the place of women in society as a whole. When we recall the evidence afforded by religious houses in which women have taken part in liturgical services in the presence of chaplains who could have taken these parts had this been necessary, it seems clear that, as far as precedent goes, the actual presence of a man is no bar to such ministrations by women.

PART III

MODERN DEVELOPMENTS

IN modern times a great change has taken place. The work that has been done for the Church by women has been continually increasing. This has been due partly to the more civilised and settled conditions of national life; partly to the spread of education; partly to the improvement of communications; but chiefly, no doubt, to the growth of the desire among women themselves to take a more prominent share of responsibility in the activities of the Church of Christ, and to their proved ability to render essential service. It has slowly become recognised that the influence of women, both in the State and in the Church, both for social and for religious progress, is of incalculable value. The great names of Hannah More, Elizabeth Fry, Mary Carpenter, Florence Nightingale, Octavia Hill, Josephine Butler, illustrate lines of beneficent social reform along which women have been actively occupied.

In the Church of England it would not be too much to say that the immense expansion of activity and of efficiency in ministering to the religious needs of the people has been due, if primarily to a quickened consciousness of their calling among the

clergy, yet scarcely less to the wonderful work accomplished by the mainly voluntary efforts of women. In a very large proportion of the parishes of England and Wales, during the last seventy years, under the different heads of district visiting, Sunday-school teaching, Church music, parochial clubs, missionary societies, study circles, rescue and preventive agencies, besides the larger organisations represented by the Sisterhoods and the Deaconess Institutions, by the Girls' Friendly Society and the Mothers' Union, an extraordinary amount of good work has been quietly and unostentatiously, voluntarily and gratuitously, achieved by women. Among the unrecorded Saints of the Church of Christ there are hundreds of names of wives, widows, and daughters of clergymen, and of single women, who in obscurity have dedicated their lives and their substance to the promotion of the Kingdom of God in our own country and in heathen lands.

The Church has gratefully acknowledged the services which women have rendered. At Diocesan Conferences, Church Congresses, and meetings of the Houses of Convocation and of the Representative Church Council, there has been abundant readiness to acknowledge the obligations which the Church is under for what women have done. But there has been little or no official recognition of women's work in the Church. It has too generally been assumed that women's work should be gratuitous, and that they could have no defined status in the organisation of diocese or parish. Even the female missionary has been sent out to her duties in distant

countries, after being approved indeed and accepted by missionary societies, but without status in the Church and without authorisation from the archbishops or bishops.

In recent years a feeling of unrest and dissatisfaction has arisen among the women of the Church. It may be traced to a variety of causes. But there are probably two which have occasioned the greatest amount of complaint:

(1) It is said that in every department of modern life openings are now made for the employment of trained and educated women, with a living wage; but that the Church makes no such provision. Neither does she insist on definite preparation and training for church and social work. That being so, the sympathy and interest of thousands of young women, who would naturally be rejoiced to have such opportunities for useful religious service, will shortly either be altogether alienated or in a large measure diverted into other channels. The loss to the Church will be most serious.

(2) It is claimed that not only duly remunerated work, but a share in responsibility and status, should be accorded to women; and, more particularly, that some definite recognition should be granted of woman's capacity for ministerial office.

At the present time it is competent for a woman to hold the position of churchwarden, and there are numerous instances in which a woman has discharged these duties with entire efficiency.

Quite recently, also, the Representative Church Council has agreed that the franchise for the election

to parochial councils should include women, baptised and confirmed, and not being members of other religious denominations. Proposals are also being submitted to the Lower House of Convocation of Canterbury that women should receive all rights or privileges granted to laymen.

THE MODERN REVIVAL.

The modern revival of women's ministry as represented by the deaconess office has taken place among the Reformed Communions, not, however, without impulses from the example of the religious communities of the Roman obedience, more especially some of the more modern orders. After sporadic attempts in various quarters, the first systematic advance was made in 1836 by Theodor Fliedner of Kaiserswerth, who, from the Lutheran standpoint, set out to "restore the Apostolic office of deaconess." The Union of Deaconess Houses connected with the Kaiserswerth foundation is now estimated to contain a membership of over 20,000 "sisters," the majority of whom are employed in the service of the sick.

The example of this Continental movement, and of the sisterhood movement in the English Church initiated by Dr. Pusey, helped to stimulate the revival of the deaconess office in the English Church. Its principal advocate was Dean Howson of Chester, and, later, Bishop Lightfoot and Bishop Thorold gave the movement strong support.

In 1862, the year in which Dean Howson published

his book on "Deaconesses," the Bishop of London, Dr. Tait, admitted Elizabeth Ferard as a deaconess. She had already visited Kaiserswerth and worked in a sisterhood at Ditchingham, and after her admission founded a home for deaconesses in West London. The diocesan deaconess houses so far established have been as follows: West London, 1862; Ely (at Bedford) and Chester, 1869; Canterbury, 1874; Salisbury, 1875; Winchester (at Portsmouth), 1879; East London, 1880; Durham, 1883; Rochester, 1887; Exeter, 1890; Southwark (at Clapham), 1891; Llandaff, 1893; Newcastle, 1905; and Chichester. Of these fourteen houses two (Canterbury and Salisbury) have been closed, and two (Rochester and Southwark) amalgamated. Of the ten still at work, three (East and West London and Chichester) are sisterhoods whose members are also admitted as deaconesses. Generally speaking, the students are trained for home work, but at Portsmouth and Clapham a considerable proportion are prepared for work in dioceses overseas. Some 282 deaconesses have been trained by these houses, and of these about 183 are now at work. About 40 students are now in training.

The Mildmay Deaconess Home in North London represents a less definitely ecclesiastical movement, due to the Rev. William Pennefather, vicar of Christ Church, Barnet, and to Catherine his wife, who were inspired by Fliedner's work at Kaiserswerth, and founded the home in 1860 for training women missionaries. In 1864 it was removed to Mildmay Park, where Mr. Pennefather had become

vicar of St. Jude's. In 1861 the Bishop of London allowed the women trained in this institution to be called deaconesses, though only a few were episcopally admitted. The Mildmay house has now been reconstructed on a definitely Church basis, and is now known as St. Catherine's House. Some ninety of its members have hitherto been admitted by their bishops, and other members are now offering themselves for ordination.

It is to be regretted that the revival of the ancient order of deaconesses, which was begun under the auspices mainly of Dean Howson and Bishops Lightfoot and Thorold nearly half a century ago, has only partially been successful. The Church as a whole has not understood the movement; and the name "deaconess" has undoubtedly been compromised by a vague use of the title as well as by the ordinary misconception of the order of the diaconate in the Church of England, and by the position of deacons in certain non-episcopal denominations.

Valuable service was rendered to the cause by the publication of the book *The Ministry of Deaconesses*, by Deaconess Cecilia Robinson, with an Appendix on the early history of the order by her brother, Dr. Armitage Robinson.

The revived order of deaconesses is now recognised in the dioceses above named, where houses have been established, and also in Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, Lahore, Sydney, Toronto, Jamaica, and Christchurch, N.Z.

The deaconess is admitted by the bishop of the diocese in which she is to be licensed to work. The

Ceremony of Admission consists of presentation by the head-deaconess or by some suitable person who vouches for the candidate's character, standard of knowledge, and training, the laying on of hands by the bishop using the prescribed formula, with prayers which follow certain lines and preserve certain features of close resemblance to the ancient service.

The deaconess works under the bishop in the parish to which she is licensed. Whether her work be carried on by her living alone or in a community is immaterial. It will depend upon the conditions under which her ministry is carried on. In densely populated districts the plan of living together in a small community has been found most advantageous for the purpose of their work both by men and by women. But in the majority of parishes there is no scope for a community, while there is abundance of work that can be done, and done best, by a trained and qualified deaconess in touch with the Mother House, working on the staff of the incumbent and holding her licence, like one of the assistant clergy, from the bishop of the diocese.

The deaconess before being admitted to ordination is required to go through a careful and thorough course of preparation, usually of two years' duration, at a recognised deaconess institution, where instruction is given in theological subjects, in practical *pastoralia*, educational theory and practice, and social science; while attention is paid to the maintenance of devotional habits and good discipline.

The deaconess wears a regular uniform by which her work and position can at once be identified.

She is subject to no vows, save to those which are involved in the promises made by her at the time of her ordination. In her parochial ministrations she holds her position as one of the "clergy," serving under the command of the incumbent, and owing direct allegiance to the bishop of the diocese, without whose permission she cannot move from her parish or undertake fresh work.

Instead of parochial work, a deaconess may also be ordained for the discharge of special duties, spiritual and intellectual, in schools, hostels, and colleges, both at home and in the Dominions. And it is obvious that in the near future there will be openings for great usefulness in the elementary and secondary education of the country.

In the great majority of the dioceses in the Church of England and in India deaconesses are under an understanding that they are not to marry. The head-deaconesses in our English dioceses consider that deaconesses, though not bound by any vows, should pledge themselves to remain unmarried. They hold that (1) marriage, with its care of a household, the disabilities attendant upon child-birth and the bringing up of a young family, would be incompatible with the activities of a deaconess's life. They also feel that a married deaconess would have to surrender a large part of her ministerial duties, and that she could not give herself to her work without distractions arising from the call of home responsibilities which it would be wrong for her to neglect. And they believe that (2) in her own interests the deaconess is greatly indebted to this

prohibition, because she enters upon her duties deliberately surrendering all contemplation of matrimony, and wherever she goes, whatever she undertakes, she has no need to allow such ideas to enter within her horizon of thought. And those who are called to work with her know that marriage with her is not a thing to be thought of; many social difficulties are at once disposed of; many causes of distraction, of ill-natured gossip, of idle folly, are summarily excluded. This point of view will be found more fully explained in Appendix XI.

On the other hand, the diocesan deaconess houses in Australia, Canada, and the West Indies, some of whose members are working in England, confine the obligations of the deaconess to the promises made by her in the service of admission, and hold that it is ethically undesirable to add a secondary obligation, not inherent in the office, to the essential pledges which it entails. The American Church, in its canon on deaconesses, provides that the appointment by the bishop of a deaconess "shall be vacated by marriage." The deaconesses referred to are agreed in taking up the office as a life-work, but they believe that the vocation of marriage, like that of the care of relatives or other family calls, may legitimately suspend the exercise of the deaconess office for a longer or a shorter time. They also hold that history conclusively proves that the married woman may in the future, as she has in the past, perform the most vital and decisive services in the ministry of the Church. The arguments are set out in Appendixes VII. and X.

It has generally been considered undesirable that the age of admission to the order of deaconesses should be lower than twenty-eight or thirty.

The ministry of a deaconess is intended to be a calling for life. It is entitled, no less than that of a clergyman, to a living wage. And in some deaconess homes wise provision is made so as to ensure in old age a pension and a home of rest when physical powers have begun to fail.

As yet there is no official definition of a deaconess in the Church of England, nor of her powers or work. Nor is there any one authorised form of ordination. The "Principles and Rules" suggested by two archbishops and eighteen bishops in 1871 define a deaconess as "a woman set apart by a bishop, under that title, for service in the Church." A Committee of the Lambeth Conference of 1897 welcomed the revival of the office, and insisted on regular admission, adequate training, and uniformity in procedure. Another Lambeth Committee in 1908 reported against authoritative direction, and asked for delay so as to allow of local development.

At the present time the deaconesses of the Anglican Communion overseas may number between three and four hundred, and those in England up to three hundred.

ON LICENSED WORKERS.

While the modern revival of the Ministry of Women in the Church finds its most intimate expression in the office of deaconess, it is even more

largely represented, in point of numbers, by the class of Church workers (many of them licensed by their bishops) who have not proceeded to episcopal admission but have received the same training as the deaconess, and perform substantially the same functions. In the returns of English Diocesan Deaconess Houses, besides the 183 deaconesses now at work, 61 licensed workers are enumerated, and Head-Deaconess Siddall writes: "Deaconesses and licensed workers are a very small proportion of the number trained in this house (Portsmouth). I have not a complete record, but the number would not be short of four hundred, I believe." If to this we add workers trained at Mildmay and various other centres, it is clear that the number of qualified, and in many cases recognised, workers (in missionary dioceses recognition is universal) greatly exceeds that of deaconesses. The careful co-ordination of this large class with the deaconess order, so as to strengthen the work of both and help to bring out the specific character of the deaconess office, is engaging the attention of the responsible authorities.

SISTERHOODS.

This section of our Report ought not to conclude without some expression of grateful recognition of the careful organisation and devoted self-denial which for the last seventy years have been exhibited by our Anglican Sisterhoods in their work of ministration to the poor and destitute in our large urban

populations. We find that any adequate inquiry into the history and work of Sisterhoods would fall outside the limits of our terms of reference.

This brief statement will account for the omission of any detailed reference to this important branch of the Ministry of Women in modern times.

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The ministry of women

